

BRAND CONCEPT · THE STRATEGY HALF · €995

Sediment

Not how it looks — what it is. Who you are for, what you are actually selling, the defensible reason to choose you, and the five messages to repeat until you are sick of them.

I

customer, described precisely

I

reason to choose you that survives scrutiny

5

messages, written, to repeat

Portfolio sample. Sediment is an invented natural wine shop and bar. No real business is described or named. This document contains no palette and no typeface on purpose — that is the concept pack, and doing them together is how businesses end up with a nice logo and no argument.

WHO YOU ARE FOR

The person who has decided wine is interesting and is embarrassed about how little they know.

They are between about twenty-eight and forty-five.
They have had a glass of something odd in a restaurant in the last year and it stayed with them.
They have looked at a wine shop window and not gone in, because the fear is not the price — it is being asked what they like and not having an answer.

They will spend €22 on a bottle without flinching and will not spend €14 twice on something they did not enjoy.
They are not collectors, they are not going to learn regions, and they do not want a course. They want somebody to hand them a bottle and be right.

What they are afraid of

Being found out. Every single decision in this strategy comes back to that sentence — the shelf labels, the way staff open a conversation, the fact that nothing in the shop is described as *challenging*.

Who you are not for

People who know wine. They are lovely, they will find you anyway, and they are eleven percent of your revenue. If the shop is built for them it becomes the exact intimidating room the other eighty-nine percent walk past.

HOW YOU CAN TELL IT IS WORKING

They come back inside a fortnight

The first bottle is a test. The second is the business.

They ask for the same thing again by your word

Another one of those cloudy ones. That is the shelf language working.

They bring somebody

The highest compliment: they now feel confident enough to be the expert for a friend.

WHAT THEY ACTUALLY DO IN THE SHOP

WHAT HAPPENS

WHAT IT MEANS

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

They circle twice before touching a bottle

Looking for a price they can commit to without asking

Prices large, on the shelf edge, every bottle

They pick up and read the back label

Hunting for a plain sentence and not finding one

Your own label, on the shelf, in front of it

They say "just browsing"

Pre-emptive defence against being questioned

Answer with a bottle, not a question

They photograph the label at the till

They intend to buy it again and do not trust their memory of the name

Number the shelf labels so they can ask for "number seven"

Observed over three Saturdays. Illustrative here; in a real strategy it is your own floor, watched.

WHAT YOU ARE ACTUALLY SELLING

Permission, not wine.

Wine is available in four other places within a hundred metres, two of them cheaper and one of them open until ten. Nobody walks past three shops to buy a fermented grape. What they cannot get anywhere else on that street is **permission to like what they like** — to be handed something, told plainly what it tastes like, and never once made to feel that the answer was obvious.

The product, restated

A bottle, a sentence about it in plain words, and the certainty that nobody in the room thinks less of you for asking. The bottle is the smallest part of that and it is the only part your competitors are selling.

Why this matters commercially

Because permission is what makes somebody spend €22 instead of €12, and it is what makes them come back on a Thursday rather than adding wine to a supermarket shop. Neither of those is a taste question.

Four shops on this street sell wine. You are the only one selling not-being-embarrassed.

WHAT THIS MEANS YOU MUST ACTUALLY DO

Rewrite every shelf label

No *terroir*, no *minerality*, no vintage-first labels. *Tastes like cold apples. Good with anything fried.* Twelve words, no jargon, every bottle.

Change how staff open

Never *what are you looking for* — that is the question they are dreading. Instead: *what are you eating tonight?* Everybody can answer that.

Put a price on the good stuff

Visible, large, on the shelf edge. Hidden prices are the single loudest signal that a shop is not for you.

A LABEL, BEFORE AND AFTER

What is on the shelf now

Domaine des Ardoisières, Cé vins 2022. Altesse & Jacquère, granite soils, 8 months on lees. Reductive, saline, taut.

Every word is accurate and the customer on page two has learned nothing except that they were right to be nervous.

What replaces it

No. 07 — €26. Tastes like a squeezed lime and wet stone. Very dry. Good with anything from the sea.

Twelve words. Nothing hidden, nothing dumbed down, and the person who does know wine can still tell exactly what it is.

THE REASON TO CHOOSE YOU

Defensible, specific, and survivable when a rival reads it.

A position is only worth having if a competitor could read it and still not be able to take it. Here is the test applied to four candidate positions, including the one being recommended.

CANDIDATE POSITION	COULD A RIVAL COPY IT?	VERDICT
The biggest natural wine range in Cork	Yes, with a phone call to the same three importers.	Fails
The cheapest interesting wine in town	Yes, and the supermarket will win it.	Fails
The most knowledgeable staff	Yes — and every rival already claims it, so it carries no information.	Fails
The shop where not knowing is the normal condition	Only by rebuilding their labels, their staff scripts and their room around it — and by giving up the customer they currently serve.	Holds

THE POSITION, IN ONE SENTENCE

Sediment is the wine shop for people who have not learned wine and are not going to.

It is uncomfortable to write on a wall, which is usually a sign it is true. It also tells you what to do on a Tuesday, which is the only real test of a position.

The cost of this position

You will lose some credibility with the eleven percent who do know wine, and one or two of them will be loud about it. That is the price. A position that costs nothing is not a position — it is a description.

HOW TO TELL WHETHER A POSITION IS REAL

It tells you what to do on a Tuesday

This one dictates the labels, the greeting and the returns policy. A position that does not change a single daily action is a slogan.

It costs you somebody

If nobody is excluded, nobody is included. The eleven percent are the price and they should be named out loud so the loss is a decision rather than a surprise.

A rival could read it and still be stuck

The test on the table above. Copying this would mean giving up the customer they have — which is a thing almost nobody does.

TONE OF VOICE

Plain, certain, never impressed with itself.

The tone follows directly from the position. If the customer's fear is being found out, then every sentence that requires prior knowledge to understand is a sentence that fails — and most wine writing is made of them.

Say this

"It tastes like cold apples and it is €19."

"If you did not like the last one, tell me what you did not like and I will get it right."

"This one is cloudy. That is meant to happen."

"Honestly, for a Tuesday, the €14 is the better bottle."

Not this

"A characterful expression of Loire Chenin with real tension."

"For the adventurous palate."

"Low intervention, zero-zero, glou-glou."

"If you know, you know."

THE RULE UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

Never use a word that would make somebody feel they should already have known it. Not because the words are wrong — *minerality* means something — but because using them is a decision to sell to the people who already know, which is a different shop with a smaller market and four competitors already in it.

Written

Twelve words a label, present tense, one flavour and one food. Nothing about the winemaker unless they did something genuinely odd.

Spoken

Answer with a bottle in your hand, not a question. The customer came in to have a decision taken off them.

Online

One bottle, one sentence, one price, every time. No stories about a family in the Jura who have farmed since 1740.

THE WORDS, LISTED

Banned outright: terroir · minerality · reductive · glou-glou · zero-zero · low-intervention · funky · challenging · expressive · nervy · saline · unfinned and unfiltered · *if you know, you know*.

Use instead: tastes like · good with · very dry · a bit fizzy · cloudy on purpose · easy · heavy · light · cold apples · wet stone · the cheap one is the good one this week.

THE FIVE MESSAGES

Repeat these until you cannot bear them, then keep going.

O1**You do not have to know anything.**

The central one. It goes on the window, it is how the staff open, and it is the first line of anything written. If only one message survives, this is it.

O2**Tell us what you are eating.**

The practical version of message one. It converts a fear into a question anybody can answer, and it is worth training every member of staff to say it in exactly those words.

O3**Twelve words a bottle.**

The promise about the labels, said out loud so it becomes a thing you are held to. It is also the most copyable-looking part of this and the hardest to actually sustain.

O4**If you did not like it, bring it back.**

Removes the last risk in the transaction. You will be taken up on it about once a month and it will cost you roughly €200 a year — which is a rounding error against the confidence it buys.

O5**The good one is usually not the dear one.**

The message that makes the other four believable. A shop willing to talk you down from €30 to €19 is a shop worth trusting at €30 when it matters.

HOW TO USE FIVE MESSAGES WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE A HOSTAGE

One per surface

The window gets message one. The shelf gets three. The till gets four. Never two on the same surface — they dilute each other.

Say them, do not display them

Four of the five are things a person says out loud. Printing them on a wall in a nice font is how a message becomes decor and stops being a promise.

Do not rotate them

The temptation at month four is to freshen them up. Recognition is built entirely by repetition, and month four is roughly when the first customer has heard one twice.

WHAT TO STOP SAYING

Three phrases doing active damage.

"Natural wine"

On the window it filters out exactly the customer described on page two — it signals a scene with rules, and the whole position is that there are no rules to fail. Keep the wine. Lose the phrase from anywhere a stranger reads first.

"Curated"

Means chosen, and everything in every shop is chosen. Its only function is to signal taste, which is the signal you are specifically trying not to send.

"For the adventurous"

Frames the customer's inexperience as a deficiency to be overcome. Nobody in the middle of feeling embarrassed wants to be told they need courage.

WHAT SURVIVES FROM THE CURRENT BRAND

The name. Sediment is good and it is doing more work than anyone realised. It is a wine word that requires no wine knowledge, it is slightly unglamorous, and it quietly signals that the shop is fine with the murky and the unexplained. Keep it and do not soften it.

The Thursday tasting. Four bottles, €10, no booking. It is already the single best expression of this strategy and it happens by accident rather than by design. It should be the thing the shop is known for, not a thing the shop also does.

THE THURSDAY TASTING. TAKEN SERIOUSLY

No booking, ever

Booking reintroduces the fear — it makes the evening a commitment you could be judged for turning up to alone. Walk in, ten euro, leave when you like.

Never announce the bottles

Publishing the list invites people to decide in advance whether they will like it, which is exactly the muscle you are trying to relax.

Say what each one is in twelve words

Out loud, same as the labels. Forty people a month hearing plain language about wine is the strategy working in public.

WHAT THIS IS JUDGED ON

The share of customers who come back within thirty days.

Not footfall, not average spend, and certainly not followers. This strategy is a bet that permission produces return visits — so return visits are the only honest test of it.

Today

19%

Illustrative. A loyalty card or a till note gets you the real figure inside two months.

Six months

30%

If the labels, the greeting and the returns promise are all in place. Nothing here depends on new stock.

If that number does not move in six months, the position is wrong — not the wording.

WHAT TO DO FIRST

Four things, and none of them cost money.

One. Rewrite twenty shelf labels this week. Twelve words, one flavour, one food. Do the twenty best-selling bottles first and see what happens to them.

Two. Change the opening line. *What are you eating tonight?* Every member of staff, every time, for a month before you judge it.

Three. Put the returns promise on the door and mean it. It is the cheapest confidence you will ever buy.

Four. Take *natural wine* off the window. Leave it on the website, where the people searching for it are already looking.

What this document deliberately does not contain

No palette, no typeface, no logo. Strategy first, identity second — and separately, so that the identity has an argument to serve. The look is decided on top of this inside the same €995 fortnight; a look built on nothing costs the same and produces a nice logo attached to no position at all.

Sediment is invented. It exists to show what the strategy half of a €995 brand concept contains — one customer described precisely, what is actually being sold, a position tested against whether a rival could copy it, tone of voice with real examples, five messages written, and the single number it should be judged on.